United Nations

Press Release

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council holds consultations in wake of proclaimed cease-fire in Persian Gulf war agreed to by all parties.

- Secretary-General says United Nations is prepared to send observer group to Gulf region as soon as possible to undertake peace-keeping function.

- Committee of United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa meets at Headquarters to discuss ways and means to help victims of apartheid.

- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization prepares $2 million "distance" education project for Africa.

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The Security Council held informal consultations today in the wake of the newly proclaimed cease-fire in the Persian Gulf war, which all parties have agreed to.

Speaking to correspondents before the consultations began, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Sir David Hannay, said the Council would be discussing what to do next. Members would take note of the very important developments since last night, namely the allied decision to cease active combat, and the Iraqi decision to accept and comply with the 12 Security Council resolutions.

Sir David said Council members would also be debating post-war arrangements, including the lifting of sanctions against Iraq and Kuwait and the release of prisoners of war.

The Ambassador of India, Chinmaya Rajaninath Gharekhan, told correspondents this afternoon there was agreement in the Council to hold an open meeting as soon as possible to finalize arrangements to make the de facto cease-fire permanent. He said India had strongly suggested that the Secretary-General should be requested to send an observer group to the region as soon as possible, and this would be the subject of Council consultations.

(more)

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar told news correspondents this morning the United Nations would be prepared to send an observer group to the Gulf as soon as possible, to undertake a peace-keeping function. He said it was up to the Security Council to decide what form the group would take, but he hoped it would consist of United Nations personnel instead of coalition forces.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar also expressed hope that the call by United States President George Bush for a cease-fire was the "beginning of the end of this terrible tragedy".

In a related development, the Secretary-General met this morning with the Foreign Minister of France, Roland Dumas, to discuss the possible peace-keeping role of the United Nations in the Gulf.

The Secretary-General's Spokesman emphazised later, in reply to questions by correspondents, that the contingency plans for a United Nations peace-keeping role in the area were purely hypothetical, since the hostilities had not formally ceased.

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The Committee of the United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa met today at Headquarters to discuss ways and means to help victims of apartheid in South Africa. Among the subjects were current and future programmes for legal, humanitarian, educational and relief assistance to such victims.

The Trust Fund for South Africa, established by the General Assembly in 1965 and financed by voluntary contributions from Governments, organizations and individuals, has granted some $40 million to organizations engaged in providing legal and humanitarian assistance to the victims of apartheid.

The participants at the meeting included representatives of voluntary organizations engaged in providing such assistance, prominent lawyers and representatives of national human rights and lawyers' associations from South Africa.

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The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced today that it has prepared a $2 million draft project to advance the use of "distance" education in Africa as part of its "Priority Africa" programme adopted in 1989.

UNESCO's Director of Co-operation with African Member States, John Kabore, said today that distance education included systematic use of such facilities as radio, television and correspondence as a means of learning. He said distance education had a crucial role to play in Africa, considering the continent's numerous economic and social problems. The use of the communications media held a tremendous potential to educate the public and to share important information among those who need to know, Mr. Kabore said.

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